

Senator Manchin's Work on Black Lung Issues

January 2011: Senator Manchin joins Senator Jay Rockefeller in reintroducing the Robert C. Byrd Mine and Workplace Safety and Health Act to not only combat workplace safety, but also limit miners' exposure to breathable dust exposure levels that lead to Black Lung disease. This was originally introduced in 2010 after the Upper Big Branch mine disaster that hit in Montcoal, West Virginia on April 5, 2010.

July 2012: Senator Manchin issues statement of support expressing that his top priority for the coal industry is to keep coal miners safe and healthy.

April 2013: Senator Manchin along-side Senator Jay Rockefeller, reintroduced the Robert C. Byrd Mine and Workplace Safety and Health Act.

March 2014: Senators Manchin, joins Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Bob Casey (D-PA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), and Congressmen Nick Rahall (D-WV-3), George Miller (D-CA-11) , and Joe Courtney (D-CT-2) in a letter to then Secretary of Labor Tom Perez pushing DOL to eliminate unfair burdens miners face when applying for Black Lung benefits.

April 2014: Senators Manchin and Rockefeller and Congressman Rahall call on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services opposing changes to the Black Lung Clinics Grant Program that would unfairly burden West Virginians suffering from Black Lung disease.

April 2014: Senator Manchin applauds the Mine Safety and Health Administration's (MSHA) new rule that lowers miners' exposure to coal dust in all underground and surface coal mines.

July 2014: Senator Manchin submits a statement expressing support for Miners' Black Lung Benefits to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Hearing.

November 2014: Senator Manchin alongside Senators Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), and Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced legislation that would prevent coal companies from unfairly denying benefits to deserving miners and their families.

April 2015: Senator Manchin urges West Virginians to comment on the U.S. Department of Labor's proposed rule that would improve Black Lung benefits by addressing obstacles that prevent miners with Black Lung from receiving benefits, reforms that were offered in Senator Manchin's 2013 legislation, the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act.

September 2015: Senator Manchin alongside Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Tim Kaine (D-VA) introduce the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2015 in an effort to overhaul the Black Lung Benefits Program to make it easier for those affected to qualify for benefits. A companion bill was filed in the House of Representatives.

January 2017: Senator Manchin filed an amendment to the budget resolution that would protect the Byrd Amendments in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) by placing a budget point of order on any legislation that would shift the burden of proof of disability due to black lung away from industry and back on the miners.

April 2017: Senator Manchin along with Senator Bob Casey (D-PA) introduced the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2017 and the Robert C. Byrd Mine Safety Protection Act of 2017 that would reform the federal program that provides benefits to coal miners suffering from Black Lung disease and allow MSHA the tools to improve mine safety.

July 2017: Senator Manchin votes against the repeal of the ACA, because there was no plan to replace it and no plan for miners with black lung to access the healthcare they need.

August 2018: Senator Manchin and Senator Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) introduced legislation that would improve early detection of black lung disease among coal miners.

December 2018: Senator Manchin sends a letter to Congressional Leadership urging the inclusion of critical miners' priorities in the end-of-year spending package. Specifically, he requested the addition of orphan miners from the 2018 bankruptcies into the Coal Act, a permanent fix to ensure the UMWA 1974 Pension Plan remains solvent, and an extension of the coal excise tax at current levels to maintain support for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund.

January 2019: Senator Manchin introduces the American Miners Act (S. 27) along with Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Mark Warner (D-VA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Doug Jones (D-AL), and Bob Casey (D-PA). This bill would address the insolvency of the 1974 UMWA Pension Fund and prevent its collapse while securing pensions for over 92,000 miners and their families. It would also protect healthcare benefits for 15,000 miners and their dependents and restore the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund contribution rate.

April 2019: Senator Manchin sends a letter to Chairman Chuck Grassley (R-IA) and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-OR) urging them to include American Miners Act provisions in the Tax Extenders package that the Finance Committee is drafting.

June 2019: During Senate consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), one of Congress' yearly "must-pass" bills, Senator Manchin offered the American Miners Act as an amendment. Unfortunately, despite securing unanimous support from the entire Democratic caucus, the Senate was not given an opportunity to vote on this amendment.

July 2019: Senator Manchin, along with Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Mark Warner (D-VA) reintroduce the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act of 2019 which expands coal miners' access to the Black Lung Benefits program.

October 2019: Senator Manchin along with 10 other Senators introduced the American Miners Act as an amendment to H.R. 3055, the Fiscal Year 2020 Appropriations Minibus. Unfortunately, despite strong support, the Senate was not given the opportunity to vote on this amendment.

December 2019: Senator Manchin secures a one-year restoration excise tax to fund the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund through December 31, 2020.

January 2020: Senator Manchin, along with Senators Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tim Kaine (D-VA), and Mark Warner (D-VA) introduce the Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act of 2020 to secure the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund through December 31, 2030.